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March 2021 Newsletter

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Yoga for Kids

By Nicole Clark, Family & Consumer Science Agent, La Plata County

Most would agree that parenting is hard. In addition to parenting, you also have adult responsibilities. In the midst of these challenges, it is easy to forget that kids, who seemingly have very little to worry about, also experience stress.



Whether you are an adult or a child, we all need a healthy way to cope with stress. There are a variety of ways to do this. Some examples include deep breathing, mindfulness, physical activity, talking to others, taking a break, or asking for help.



Of the examples listed, one that may be new to you is the practice of mindfulness. A simple way to describe mindfulness is, being in the moment, with awareness, and being non-judgmental. It can be as simple as noticing a breeze in the air during a walk outside. Or, recognizing when you feel stressed and naming the emotions that come with it (anger, frustration, fatigue, etc.).

Yoga is a practice that has been around for thousands of years. It promotes health of the mind and body because it combines physical activity, controlled breathing, relaxation, and awareness. As a result, yoga can be an effective way to cope with stress, learn self-regulation, and problem-solve. At the same time, yoga helps build strength, flexibility and improves balance.

An additional benefit of yoga is that it requires no special equipment and can be done at any fitness level, in as little as 10 - 15 minutes.

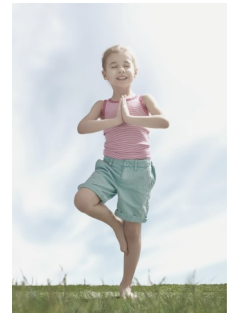
There are many styles of yoga. Over time, you may find one you like better than others. As a beginner, the goal is to become familiar with a few simple poses, experience mindfulness, and enjoy a moment of connectedness with your family. All while improving your physical and mental well-being.



Helping families increase physical activity and enjoy healthy foods ...

Tips for Success:

- First, yoga poses should not cause pain. Your flexibility and balance will improve over time. Do what you can, even if it is far from perfect.
- Start with a few deep breaths and light movement to warm up your muscles and tendons.
- Focus your attention on what you are doing and feeling as you begin. Allow yourself to set aside thoughts about anything else; it is only for a moment.
- Practice yoga without socks and shoes on. Preferably, on a floor without carpet, or on a mat to prevent slipping.
- During poses, stare at one point on the floor or wall to help with balance.
- Wear comfortable, stretchy clothes that will not get in the way, and allow you to move freely.
- Make yoga fun for kids. Start with a dance to get wiggles out; be creative with naming poses; count to 7 on inhale, and 11 during exhale; change poses frequently or make it a game to see who can hold the pose longest.

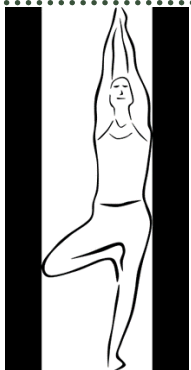


Let's Talk

When your child (or teen) appears stressed, ask if they are willing to try a fun, new activity to feel better. If they are willing, explain how yoga has two components: deep breathing and physical activity.

Deep breathing helps with stress by lowering heart rate. Practice together by placing one hand on the belly and inhaling deep and slow, feel the abdomen extend. Aim for 6 - 8 deep breathes per minute. Ask your child to name their emotions both before and after, in order to connect the benefit.

Next, share some of the positive benefits associated with being active. Avoid discussing negative impacts related to inactivity. Benefits include confidence, strong muscles and bones, better balance, and improvement in sports or other activities enjoyed by your child.



Tree pose:

Place foot of one leg, on ankle (beginner), calf (mid-level), or inner thigh (advanced). Stretch arms above head, biceps touching ears. Hold & breathe. Switch standing leg.

Warrior:

Take one big step forward. Bend leading leg, aiming for a 90-degree angle. Be sure knee does not extend beyond toes. Rotate at waist so arm and leading leg from same side of body are forward. Raise arms, keeping fingertips just below shoulder level.



For more information on practicing yoga with children click on the link below:

https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CCDPHP/DCDIC/NEOPB/CDPH%20Document%20Library/300002_Shape_of_Yoga_Booklet.pdf

<https://4h.uaex.edu/programs/docs/FSFCS70%20-%20Yoga%20for%20kids%20basics%20fact%20sheet.pdf>

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